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FOURTEENTH STRATEGIC AEROSPACE DIVISION

CUBAN CRISIS ANNEX

October History
1962

Volume II

(Unclassified Title)


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Unit Assigned to the
Fifteenth Air Force, Strategic Air Command
Hans Station

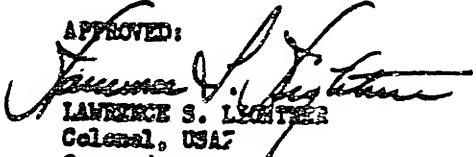
Beale Air Force Base, Marysville, California

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CHAPTER I

THE CRISIS

Covert action was on the agenda for personnel of all tactical units of the Fourteenth Strategic Aerospace Division (14 Strat AD) on a Saturday afternoon in late October, (20 Oct). The Fifth Bombardment Wing, Travis AFB, California; the 4126th Strategic Wing, Beale AFB, California; and the 4134th Strategic Wing, Mather AFB, California, personnel were quietly generating additional Alert aircraft in response to a message from the Strategic Air Command (SAC) relative to the re-instatement of all degraded sorties. ¹

On the following Sunday, 21 Oct, another TOP SECRET Zippo message from SAC instructed the Division's tactical units to generate two aircraft immediately and the generated aircraft were to be placed on a "standby" status for possible placement on ground Alert in the event the one-eight (1/8) Airborne Alert configuration was implemented. This was the instruction for the B-52 units within the Division while the EC-135 units were instructed to generate sufficient tankers to comply with deployment instructions in support of one-half (1/2) Airborne Alert, if executed. ²

Again the instructions from the Strategic Air Command headquarters stressed covert action on the part of personnel concerned in this generation exercise. However, the message specifically stated that

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1. FAX, SAC TS Zippo 10-284, Re-Instate Degraded Sorties, 20 Oct 1962 4126SW Command Post File, ~~TOP SECRET~~
 2. FAX, SAC TS Zippo 10-292, Delta Two, 21 Oct 1962, 4126SW CP File ~~TOP SECRET~~

replacement crews for the generated aircraft would not be placed on Alert. However, the message further stated that in the event of an Airborne Alert, the ground Alert sorties would be replaced with generated aircraft as rapidly as the crews could be recalled under the normal ³pyramid.

The Nation's newspapers on Sunday morning had presented to the American people a graphic description of the Washington scene which had to do with the many closed door meetings being held by both Congressional representatives and those from the Department of Defense. It became apparent to the newspaper readers throughout the United States that the answer to the Washington activity was completely dependent upon a pre-scheduled televised address by President John F. Kennedy on the following Monday ⁴afternoon. (U)

In his address to the Nation, President Kennedy stated that Cuba had become a Soviet military satellite and had introduced offensive and defensive weapons systems which could not only threaten the Caribbean Nations but the United States as well. ⁵The President declared a "State of Quarantine" against Cuba and said that all ocean traffic to that area would be monitored. ⁶

Immediately after the President's address to the Nation, Colonel Lawrence S. Lightner, 14 Strat AD commander, was notified at 1500 PDST that a DEFCON 3 situation was to be established within all units of

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3. T&E, SAC TS Zippe 10-292, Delta Two, Generation Exercise, 21 Oct 1962; 4126SW Command Post File (TS)
 4. Author's Observance
 5. T&E, 14AF TS Zippe 10-600, Intelligence Survey, 23 Oct 1962, 4126SW Command Post File (TS)
 6. Author's Observance

the Strategic Air Command.

Still later on this same afternoon, Colonel Lightner received a telephone call from General Archie J. Old, Fifteenth Air Force commander, directing that actions be taken within the Division to move into DEFCON 2 at approximately 0700 PST Tuesday morning which coincided with the start of the Cuban Blockade.

The Division's tactical units went into DEFCON 2 at the pre-arranged hour. This particular situation called for around-the-clock duty for all units.

Colonel Lightner joined other Senior SAC Commanders at a special meeting of the 4126th Strategic Wing's Battle Staff on Wednesday morning, 24 Oct, to hear from their Commander in Chief, General Thomas S. Power. The General's message was

"... This is General Power speaking. I am addressing you for the purpose of re-emphasizing the seriousness of the situation this Nation faces. We are in an advance state of readiness to meet any emergencies and I feel that we are well prepared. I expect each of you to maintain strict security and use calm judgement during this tense period. Our plans are well prepared and are being executed smoothly. If there are any questions concerning instructions which by nature of the situation deviates from the normal, use the telephone for clarification. Review your plans for further action to

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7. FAX, SAC TS Zippo 10-394 to CPs, Implementation of DEFCON 2, 24 Oct 1962; 4126SW Command Post File (TS)
 8. Interview, 1st StratAD DEIO, by Historian, 12 Nov 1962
 9. FAX, SAC S Zippo 10-326, Implementation 1/8 Airborne Alert, 4126SW Command Post File (S)
 10. Copy, Voice Message, 24 Oct 1962; Question arose over classification of the General's message. Col. Glen E. Knox, 1st StratAD, requested it be classified as CONFIDENTIAL.

~~TOP SECRET~~

to insure that there will be no mistakes or confusion. I expect you to cut out all non-essentials and put yourself in a maximum readiness condition. If you are not sure of what you should do in any situation, and if time permits, get in touch with us here (SAC). (U)

On 26 Oct 1962, General Old called Colonel Lightner relative to the mandatory standard of personal conduct and discipline within his command. A confirmation message was received shortly afterward that stated in part: ¹¹ (U)

"... It is absolutely essential that all personnel are again reminded of the tremendous faith the American people have in the ability of the Strategic Air Command to perform its assigned mission. The image of SAC in the eyes of the World has been and will continue to be created by the men and women who comprise SAC." (U)

"... During this period of increased tension there may be a tendency on the part of some to overly relax during non-duty hours to the extent that desired standards of conduct and appearance are degraded." General Old described the desired standards of conduct in the remainder of this message. ¹² (U)

On 22 Oct 1962, Colonel Lightner sent Colonel Glen Knox and Lieutenant Colonel Richard D. Christensen to Travis to review the posture of the Fifth Bomb Wing under the modified DEFCON 3, established by SAC. These Directors attended the pre-takeoff briefing for the first crews to fly CHROME DOME under the one-eight (1/8) concept. ¹³ (U)

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11. Copy, General Power's voice message, SAC Senior Commanders, 24 Oct 1962 (TS)
 12. TTX, 15AF C to Division, Wing, and Base Commanders, Standard of Personal Conduct and Discipline, 27 Oct 1962, IXO File (U)
 13. Interview, Lt Col Edwards by Historian, 25 Oct 1962

Colonel Knox, Lieutenant Colonels Christensen and James T. Edwards visited Hather AFB on 23 Oct to review the posture of the 434th Strategic Wing under the modified DEFCON 3. The Staff Visitors attended the pre-takeoff briefing for the second crews to fly CHROME DOME under the 1/8 concept. Colonel Edwards checked the CHROME DOME OPORD for currency and attended a general briefing¹⁴ for crews for the mission on the evening of 23 Oct 1962. (U)

14. Interview, Col Edwards by Historian, 25 Oct 1962

CHAPTER II

INTELLIGENCE BRIEFS

Fifteenth Air Force officials dispatched the following back-
ground of the Cuban situation on 23 Oct 1962: ¹⁵

Soviet has converted Cuba into a military satellite and intro-
duced offensive and defensive systems which can threaten not only
Caribbean Nations, but SAC bombers, missile bases and control
elements. Soviet deployment of ballistic missiles of medium and inter-
mediate range has been confirmed in the last few days. Current OB was
16 MRBM launchers with a total of 48 SS-4s and eight IRBM SS-5s.
These ballistic missiles, for which there is no BMEWS Warning System
or other defense, are believed manned by Soviet crews. Growth of
this force, plus light bomber units, could be expected. Reinforce-
ments are anticipated from a fleet of 23 ships now enroute from
U.S.S.R. to Cuba, and seven are now at the docks. Events in Cuban
area may generate rapid deterioration of security of other Free-World
Nations allied to U. S., with possibility of Soviet aggression in
Europe and Asia. ¹⁶

Although no Soviet military preparations which directly threaten
U. S. Forces, have been reported, however, the possibility of hostile
actions cannot be excluded. ¹⁷

15. TMI, 15AF TS Zippo 10-600, Intelligence Survey, 23 Oct 1962,
4126SW Command Post File (TS)

16. Ibid.

17. Ibid.

Summary of Defense: Twenty-four SA-2 SAM sites have been identified of which 18 are considered operational. One intercepted signal is of the C-band Fruitset Guidance and control radar variety. There are 39 new generation Fishbed fighters and 60 Fagots, Fresco type.

Army Background: The Cuban Ground Forces consist of a standing army of about 75,000 and a ready reserve of about 100,000. In addition, there are homeguard-type militia units numbering about 100,000 whose function is to augment the police as necessary to control the population. The militia units have no significant combat capability. The standing army has received intensive training in the use of Bloc-supplied arms and equipment, and tactical training through the Battalion-Combat Team level. It has acquired capabilities for the combat employment of armor and artillery (including antiaircraft and antitank weapons) hitherto unknown in any Caribbean country. The ready reserve battalions are less heavily armed and less thoroughly trained. For operational purposes, Cuba has been divided into three Territorial Commands designated as the Armies of the West, Center, and East. Each has operational control over all standing army, ready reserve, and tactical air units within its area and is intended to be logistically self-sufficient. The basic combat unit is the battalion combat team. Within the three armies, two corps, three military regions and 44 division headquarters (40 located) have been identified.

12. FMX, 15AF TS Zippo 10-600, Intelligence Surveys 23 Oct 1962
4126W Command Post File (TS)

field. All of these headquarters have administrative and training responsibilities, but as yet no apparent operational control. There are believed to be some 300 battalions in the Cuban Ground Forces of which about one-half are in the active army. Most of these are believed to have an authorized strength of 528, but some are authorized about 1,000 men. Both active and reserve battalions vary greatly in strength and efficiency. Eloc advisers probably are assigned to the principal staffs throughout the military establishment. Eloc instructors are stationed at established military schools, training areas, and a few have been reported with divisions.

This was the beginning of the Cuban Crisis. The completed picture will be presented in next month's annex which will define the activities of the Division during this period. (U)

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19. FM, 15AF TS 21pp 10-600, Intelligence Survey, 23 Oct 1962
 412654 Command Post File (S)
 20. History, 143rd AD, October 1962, IIO File (S)

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History of the

FOURTEENTH STRATEGIC AEROSPACE DIVISION

CUREA CRISIS ANNEX

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Unit Assigned to the

FIFTEENTH AIR FORCE, STRATEGIC AIR COMMAND

Hans Station

Beale Air Force Base, Marysville, California

This document was prepared by Staff Sergeant William M. Statler, unit historian, under the supervision of Captain Charles E. Evans, Jr., Wing Information Officer. It was prepared in accordance with SACR 710-1, 20 Nov 1958, and is classified TOP SECRET under the provisions of AFR 30b, AFR 305-1, 1 June 1960. This classification conforms to that of the source documents which bear on the combat capability of this organization. This title page contains no classified information. (U)

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Chapter I

THE SITUATION

After the first few hours of DEXTON 2, it became apparent to those within the Division and its tactical units that the situation would develop into a routine matter. The Cuban Crisis lasted four weeks, (DEXTON 3, 22 Oct; DEXTON 2, 23 Oct 1962¹), and was to end on 21 Nov 1962².

The Division's Staff Officers visited the three tactical units within their organization for the express purpose of reviewing and evaluating each unit's War Support Plan³. (C)

The reviewing of the War Support Plans and Emergency War Orders brought recommendations from the Staff Visitors so that each unit could strengthen and iron out any deficiencies incorporated in the unit's basic plans. The DEXTON 2 situation revealed many problems within this area that would need an overall evaluation from higher headquarters. Fifteenth Air Force officials requested the Commanders to forward a specific list of these areas and their recommendations⁴.

On 13 Nov 1962, Colonel Lightner dispatched the requested list of areas and his recommendations for same. The Colonel's evaluation of the situation as revealed by DEXTON 2 will be the subject of the following chapter⁵.

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1. TTX, S Zippo 10-320, Implementing 1/8 Airborne Alert, 20 Oct 1962, 11265 Command Post File
 2. TTX, SAC T3 Zippo 11-750 to November, DEXTON Situation, 22 Nov 62, 11265 Command Post File
 3. History, 11265AD, November, on File
 4. TTX, 15AF S Zippo 11-245 (CS) Problems of Dispersal, 10 Nov 1962, 11265AD Commander's File
 5. TTX, 11265AD C to 15AF, Problem Areas, 13 Nov 1962, 11265AD File

Chapter II

THE EVALUATION

Colonel Lightner cited BAO weapons requirements versus weapons allocated and on hand as the most outstanding problem within the Division. His message stated:

" . . . Biggest problem division wide was the BAO weapons requirements versus weapons allocated and on hand. Constant uploading/downloading, weapon substitution, C/P modifications, crew study, degradation of planned tactics, (etc), has created an exceptionally heavy workload." The Colonel reminded Fifteenth Air Force officials that they were fully cognizant of this problem, however, the situation remained the same (unchanged).

Climatological factors received second billing relative to the problem areas. " . . . Climatological factors should be considered when establishing takeoff/recovery times for C-47/D-47 sorties. Berle, Travis, and Hather should have launch and recovery times between 1200 and 1600 PST during winter operations to preclude diversions due to fog."

" . . . Temporary tanker assignments received by units have arrived late and were not complete enough to activate the sortie without contacting the bomber unit concerned to obtain critical information. More detailed information such as C/R Plan, offload task,

6. TME, 11/27/42 C to 15AF, Problem Areas, 13 Nov 1942, on file
7. Ibid.

Codes, Country Codes, and withhold information was needed. Recommended that temporary tanker assignments contain all essential information and allow sufficient unit reaction time before the tanker sortie is activated.⁸

"...last problems are result of remaining in DEFCON 2 for extended periods. Recommendation:⁹

a. Authorization to degrade generated sortie to allow for special weapons and GAK loading training and standardization checks in addition to current authorization for crew proficiency which becomes effective 15 Nov.

b. Permit unit commanders to reduce restrictive personnel control measures to a minimum consistent with EAO launch requirements.

c. AFIC logair service be extended to each B-52 base.

d. Combat Defense Squadrons should be brought up to authorized strength. Augmentation over extended period produces many problems.

e. No limit be applied to number of Alert sorties a combat crew may study during extended DEFCON operations. CIRCULAR SORTIES should not count as studied sorties.¹⁰

Colonel Lightner recommended a review of missile backlog of minor maintenance, TOC's, ECP's, and corrosion control problems which were developing under present conditions of continued maximum readiness.¹⁰

8. TTX, 11 StratAD C to IMAF, Problem Areas, 13 Nov 1962, on file

9. Ibid.

10. Ibid.

Chapter III

TAPS

During the latter part of November, the Division Commander was notified of a change in DEFCONs by a Zippo message originated at Headquarters, Strategic Air Command. The message read in part:

... CINCSAC establishes DEFCON Three effective 2330Z, 21 November. DEFCON Three is modified as follows: (1) Aircraft remain generated with exception of previously authorized degraded sorties. (2) Medium Forces on dispersed bases will remain generated and in place in accordance with present instructions. (3) Current instructions for the Missile Forces apply."

11. FAX, SAC TS Zippo 11-730 to November, DEFCON Situation, 22 Nov 1962; 112654 Command Post File